United Nations A/52/PV.84

General Assembly
Fifty-second Session

Official Records

84th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 6 May 1998, 4.40 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 4.40 p.m.

Agenda item 120 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (Article 19 of the Charter) (A/52/785/Add.4)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/52/785/Add.4, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications dated 4 February, 23 and 31 March and 27 April 1998, Guatemala has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 157 *(continued)*

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Report of the Secretary-General (A/52/822)

Notes by the Secretary-General (A/52/847, A/52/848, A/52/849, A/52/850, A/52/851 and Corr.1, A/52/852)

Draft decision (A/52/L.73/Rev.3)

The President: In connection with this item, the Assembly has before it the draft decision contained in document A/52/L.73/Rev.3, which has five parts, A to E. As members are aware, the text of part D is orally revised to read as follows:

> "The General Assembly welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to designate the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 as the Millennium Assembly, and decides to continue the consideration of the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/850 at its fifty-third session."

We shall now proceed to consider draft decision A/52/L.73/Rev.3, as orally revised.

Is there any delegation that wishes to speak before we take a decision? I see none.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/52/L.73/Rev.3, as orally revised.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft decision contained in A/52/L.73/Rev.3, as orally revised?

The draft decision, as orally revised, was adopted.

The President: I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the delegations for their cooperation.

98-85310 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Is there any delegation that wishes to speak in explanation of its position after the adoption of the draft decision?

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): I would like to make a statement this afternoon on behalf of the delegations of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ).

The CANZ delegations are pleased to have been able to join the consensus today and to adopt the draft decision which covers several of the Secretary-General's reform proposals. We have been pleased with the relatively straightforward manner in which the plenary has been able to deal with the majority of these proposals. Our delegations are mindful that the valuable momentum gained from last year's critical effort in reaching agreement on resolutions 52/12 A and B should not be lost through another long procedural debate. And, as you, Sir, said at the outset of these meetings, no one in the Assembly could seriously question the need for ongoing reform in the United Nations. To that end we are pleased that the relatively painless open plenary format has been kept as the most effective way to continue consideration of this agenda item. I underline the "relatively painless".

We also reiterate that our starting premise on reform is not reform for reform's sake, but a genuine desire to make the United Nations a more flexible, coherent and dynamic partner, with which we can jointly and effectively pursue the peace, security and development challenges.

The focus on United Nations reform is now properly on the substantive policy proposals of the Secretary-General. Permit me to make some detailed comments on the decision we have just taken.

With regard to parts A and B, we would emphasize that the two Main Committees which this plenary has requested to consider three notes and a report need to bear in mind that high priority must be accorded in dealing with them, and that the plenary and its President will continue to play the key guiding role in their work. We would expect the Main Committees to consider these documents in the timely and responsible manner expected of them by the plenary in the decision. The General Assembly plenary is the highest decision-making body in the United Nations, and it would not be acceptable, or in the interest of the Organization, if what has been agreed to in principle today is not expeditiously dealt with by the subsidiary bodies, for whatever reason.

Part A of the decision deals with two important proposals: the Development Account and the revolving credit fund. We are indeed pleased that the chair of the Fifth Committee, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, has ensured that they are on the work programme of the Committee's second resumed session, which begins next week. The Fifth Committee will also consider the Secretary-General's note on pilot projects. No action is required of the General Assembly on this matter, since the note simply states the legal position of the Secretary-General in terms of delegation of authority in financial and human resources management. Therefore, we expect the Fifth Committee to note the note, as it were.

Part B of our decision is essentially in agreement with how the Secretary-General is proceeding with his proposal on the core resources for development. With respect to part C, on a new concept of trusteeship, we await with interest the report sought by the Secretary-General from the Task Force chaired by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

We have strongly supported the Secretary-General's ideas concerning the Millennium Assembly since they were first proposed. We are pleased to see that the Assembly concurs with the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Assembly's fifty-fifth session be designated the Millennium Assembly, and we look forward to the report he will present in the year 2000. Part D of the decision is consistent with letting the Secretary-General formulate ideas for the Millennium-related proposals, and on these we welcome Mr. Ruggie's explanation last week that they are not intended to be merely celebratory events, but should produce a serious conceptualization of what the United Nations system should represent and how it should operate in the decades ahead, as well as a clear plan on how to implement such a vision.

In the latter connection, we hope that the Secretary-General is able to secure sufficient cooperation in the Administrative Committee on Coordination in developing proposals for meaningful reform of the United Nations system as a whole. If not, we agree with his suggestion that a ministerial commission, which might have played a valuable role in preparing for the Millennium Assembly, may be an option in following through on the Assembly's work.

Finally, we support the Secretary-General fully in his proposal to encourage Member States to consider time

limits for initiatives. This proposal is not a curtailment of the prerogatives and priorities of Member States. I cannot underline that too strongly. It is, instead, a sound principle to be followed when new mandates are being formulated. It is part of a management philosophy for instilling much-needed discipline into the United Nations strategic management of key issues, issues to which we all ascribe as being fundamental to the existence of the United Nations in the first place. We hope that future discussion of this crucial reform proposal will reflect these considerations.

Canada, Australia and New Zealand continue to consider that the Secretary-General is presenting us with forward-thinking reforms that are crucial for the continuing relevance of the United Nations in international relations, and to which we continue to pledge our full support. We look forward to the speedy reports from the Second and Fifth Committees on several of these proposals and to further news from the Secretary-General on the others.

The President: Are there any other delegations wishing to speak on this issue? I see none.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 157.

Announcement

The President: I should like to draw the attention of Member States to a letter dated 4 May 1998 that I have transmitted to all Permanent Representatives to the United Nations concerning two reports of the Secretary-General.

The first is the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/241 of 31 July 1997 on the strengthening of the United Nations system, under agenda item 60. This report has been issued as document A/52/855.

The second is the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/264 of 29 July 1994 on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, under agenda item 21. This report has been issued as document A/52/856.

Both reports have been circulated in all languages.

Attached to my letter is an annex setting out pending issues that require the attention of or a decision by the General Assembly, as indicated by the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/241, which is contained in document A/52/855. I would urge delegations to review those issues, as they would have an impact on the organization of the work of the current session as well as that of the fifty-third and subsequent sessions of the General Assembly.

It is my intention to convene the General Assembly during the first week of June, before the special session, to consider those two reports and to take appropriate action.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.